

REMARKS

Applicants reply to the final Office Action dated December 24, 2009 within two months. The Examiner rejects all pending claims 1-8 and 11-16. Applicants cancel claims 2-3, 5, 8, 11 and 15-16, without prejudice or disclaimer to re-file claims of a similar nature in this or a subsequent application. Applicants add new claims 17-22. Support for the amendments and new claims may be found in the originally-filed specification, claims, and figures. No new matter has been introduced by these amendments and new claims. Applicants assert that the application is in condition for allowance and reconsideration of the pending claims is requested.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

The Examiner rejects 1-11, 13 and 15-16 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Arkes (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2007/0118461) in view of Griffiths (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0116316). The Examiner rejects claim 12 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Arkes in view of Griffiths further in view of Yakos (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0260645) and Iannacci (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0062249). The Examiner rejects claim 14 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Arkes in view of Griffiths in view of Mok (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0015394). Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's rejections; however, Applicants amend certain pending claims, without prejudice or disclaimer, to further clarify the patentable aspects of the presently recited claims.

Arkes discloses a closed rewards on-line auction, typically offered by an employer to incentivize employees. The system provides the participant (e.g. an employee) with a points account which can be used to bid on auction items. The system allows a participant to bid on auction items with a points account.

Griffiths discloses a system for managing a plurality of auctions through a master auction listing. The system allows a participant to bid through the master auction system on items listed in each of the individual auctions.

Applicants assert that the cited references alone or in combination do not disclose or contemplate at least, "wherein the rewards account was registered with the auction system," and/or "reserving to a pending status, by the computer based system, the first portion of the rewards account balance such that the first portion is unavailable in the rewards account balance;" as similarly recited in claims 1, 21, and 22.

Furthermore, claims 4, 6-7, 12-14, and 17-21 variously depend from independent claim 1. As such, Applicants assert that claims 4, 6-7, 12-14, and 17-20 are differentiated from the cited references for the same reasons as set forth above, in addition to their own novel features. Thus, Applicants respectfully request allowance of all pending claims.

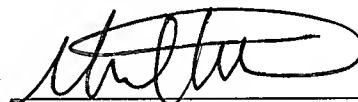
When a phrase similar to "at least one of A, B, or C" or "at least one of A, B, and C" is used in the claims, Applicants intend the phrase to mean any of the following: (1) at least one of A; (2) at least one of B; (3) at least one of C; (4) at least one of A and at least one of B; (5) at least one of B and at least one of C; (6) at least one of A and at least one of C; or (7) at least one of A, at least one of B, and at least one of C.

Applicants respectfully submit that the pending claims are in condition for allowance. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees which may be required, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-2814. If an extension of time is necessary, please accept this as a petition therefore. Applicants invite the Office to telephone the undersigned if the Examiner has any questions regarding this Reply or the present application in general.

Respectfully submitted,

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